

Consider the multitude of achievements that can be attributed to the most excellent sexing of the turgid manstaff:

- Heal childhood trauma, one orgasm at a time
- Awaken a woman from a complete absence of sexual knowledge, one orgasm at a time
- Craft the perfect insatiable and instinctively excellent sexual partner, one orgasm at a time
- Elevate sexual intercourse to near heavenly experiences, one orgasm at a time
- Exist in a state of constant hornytoad, alleviated one orgasm at a time.
- Access unforeseen-

“It’s a lot of pressure, you know.”

Sarah: I’m sorry, who are you?

“I am Lord Hawklenravenbearesfordvilleperegrineton.”

...

“But under Janet Mullaney’s direction, I am told you may call me Perry.”

Sarah: What’s the problem, Perry?

Perry: Well, I’ve been elected-

Sarah: Elected?

Perry: Yes. I’m over here with Vladdy, Streuth, and Morgan.

Sarah: Who?

Perry: We’re the ICH.

Sarah: You Itch? You want to admit that in public?

Perry: No, no, the ICH. The International Consortium of Heroes.

Sarah: I see.

Perry: No, I don’t think you do. You’re not giving heroes a fair shake.

Sarah: *snort*

Perry: *ahem* You see, as the romance narrative has progressed to represent the emotional risk and rewards for both protagonists, the emotional health and happiness of the hero is part of the assured happy ending.

Sarah: Right. So?

Perry: Here at the ICH we're committed to the outsourcing of romance novel heroic archetypes, and to the care and commiseration immediately after the happy ending, and any period of time after that.

Sarah: So you're a drinking club of romance heroes?

Perry: Drinking is only part of what we do, madam.

Sarah: O RLY?!

Perry: Oh, for God's sake, woman, nothing like that.

Sarah: I see. Sure. Go on.

Perry: As I said, your expectations of the hero are just insurmountable for the average male. Classic examples: Clayton? Whitney's Love? He'd still be groveling for that spanking following the horse jumping scene. I won't even mention some of the heroes who suffered under Putney's reformation of alcoholic rakes.

Sarah: How is that suffering, though, if they're reformed and happy now?

Perry: My point is the pressure of the "mighty wang," as you call it.

Sarah: I'm sorry, the pressure point of the mighty wang?

Perry: Oh, hush. Your expectations, they're too much. It's a misery unto itself. On top of all this emotional revolution pap we have to endure, and the part where we have to both show and tell how we feel – what poppycock that is – we're ultimately summed up by the performance of our penises, and that is deucedly unfair.

Sarah: How is it unfair?

Perry: We have a larger role in the romance novel, and we work toward our own happy ending and toward being worthy of the heroine. But all that is tolerable until you get to the penis part. We've got an unfair amount of the workload, here, in the romance novels. It's incredible pressure. And pressure to go up usually means the pressure goes down.

Sarah: Yes, it's another way in which the romance novel hero is a superhuman among men, but we won't mention that.

Perry: Yes, thank you. But consider our responsibilities. They are legion. We have to be heroic. Strong. Heroically strong. Strongly heroic. Flush with our own heroic strength. And we're responsible for self-actualization of the heroine, or just the completion of her happiness, or we're supposed to fulfill an element of her life, and on top of all that, not that this isn't plenty, we're responsible for the orgasm! I mean, have you SEEN a vagina? It's a valley of mystery and we're supposed to roll on in there like we've got a map and a GPS to OrgasmLand. Only given the sex scene dialogue, it's not like the heroine gives us a loud and clear, "YOU HAVE ARRIVED AT YOUR DESTINATION!" Half the time I don't know what the fuck is going on –"

Sarah: No pun intended?

Perry: Quite.

Sarah: But I think you might be underestimating your role in the heroine's story, in as much as it is your story as well. Jayne Ann Krentz and Linda Barlow wrote –

Perry: You do know that book is older than the pair of boots I'm currently wearing, don't you?

Sarah: Yes, but when it comes to critical analysis of romance and romance readers, we have precious little to work with, much like your calves, as a matter of fact.

Vladdy: Och, laddie, she went there, dinnen she?

Sarah: You're a Scottish vampire?

Vladdy: Aye.

Sarah: Lovely. Anyway, consider what they said:

"The reader... [doesn't] have to worry – as many modern women do in their everyday lives – about being too assertive, too aggressive, too verbally direct, because this hero is as strong as she is. He is a worthy opponent, a mythic beast who is her heroic compliment."
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Perry: So you're saying that we're superhumanly full of the might of our own wang merely because it's the heroine who is superpowered, and we're amplified to be her equal?

Sarah: Yup. Compare that to the power of her healing hey-nanner-nanner –

Perry: Must you call it that?

Sarah: What would you prefer, her velvet love grotto? Her folds of damp and silken darkness? Sounds like a basement with a lot of curtains in it.

Perry: Never mind

Sarah: Anyhoo, your mythic super power, and all your alphaness, and your superduper Wang of Awesome ultimately serve one purpose: to equal the unharnessed power of the woman – the reader and the heroine – and thus create a balanced unity in your courtship.

Perry: What?!

Sarah: Women are awesome. Hugely awesome. Superpowered awesome with a side order of kickass. Only now are heroines catching up to that level of awesome. So that awesome was encoded in the depiction of the hero: you dudes represent the sides of ourselves that aren't tolerable to most society: strong, passionate, sexual, ruthless, angry, vengeful women are not necessarily Nice. And by all means, we must be Nice. You guys represent a facet of our liberation.

Perry: You're still not explaining one key element to heroism, romance style. One that we struggle with regularly.

Sarah: What's that?

Perry: You're talking about behavior that, if we exhibited such actions in real life, would get us arrested or at the least beat to shit by a large brother or cousin of the heroines. I can't act half that awful in real life without significant repercussions to my person.

Sarah: Yup. It's true. Romance heroes get away with all kinds of shit that real life men can't go near.

Perry: So why are all these women reading romances filled with heroes like us who behave abominably and get praised for it, whereas if we acted like that for 5 seconds in real life we'd get a retraining order?

Sarah: I think part of it is that your overbearing alpha hero-ness does not read the same to every reader. Some readers hate heroes who are so full of their own majesty they think their shit comes out gift wrapped. But others, you're right, adore these types of heroes, and for them, perhaps, as I said, that fantasy becomes representative not of bullying but of protection and devotion. But I rather like the theory that heroes represent the socially-unacceptable parts of the female personality, and seeing it displayed in such tantrum-level sweeps of exaggeration is reassuring, because ultimately even the most outrageous hero is tamed. Whether the reader likes him at the end of the story is individual and obviously subjective, but by the end, he's tamed or reformed, and the outrageous "masculine" elements of rage, passion, ruthlessness, and sexuality are reconciled with the more socially acceptable elements that make up the heroine.

Perry: I'm not buying that.

Sarah: That's my theory, Per. And I'm as full of shit as anybody. But I think that the hero is a powerful, powerful creature. And come on, now, let's be honest: it's not rocket science to bring a man to orgasm. Women are a more intricate creature in that regard.

Perry: You bet your pelisse they are.

Sarah: So, your mighty wang, which you perceive as pressure, is really just a giant, throbbing manstaff of reassurance and completion. There is no doubt she'll come all over the place because of your effortless expertise. And with the arrival and increasing number of male- male romances, an entirely new field of study arises to examine the role of the sexual completion process of two heroes.

Perry: Oh, HELL no. I can tell you first hand that the ICH has decided issues with this "rise" as you call it of male-male romance.

Sarah: O RLY?

Perry: Emailing you now.